

Application No.: 09/974040

Case No.: 56685US002

REMARKS

The remarks below respond to the Office Action mailed December 22, 2003.

Claims 1-15, 17-38 and 45-49 are pending in the application.

With this response, claims 1, 23, 24, 31, and 45 are amended, claim 22 is canceled, and claims 50-53 have been added.

Claims 1, 2, 5-15, 17-21, 23-32, 36-38, 45-53 remain in the application for consideration.

Reconsideration and allowance of the claims, as amended, and in view of the following remarks, are respectfully requested.

If any additional fee is required please charge to Deposit Account No. 13-3723 and notify Applicant of the same.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 102 and 103

Claims 1-2, 5-11, and 17-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Heffelfinger (U.S. 6,582,810). Claims 1, 12-15, 21, 25-28, 30-31 and 45-49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Heffelfinger (U.S. 6,582,810).

The rejections are overcome by amendment to claims 1 and 45.

Claims 1 and 45 have been amended to recite features of microfiber average effective diameter and transverse aspect ratio, as in original claim 22. The Office action indicates that claim 1, if amended to include the subject matter of claim 22, would be allowable. Claim 45, similarly amended, should also be allowable.

The Office action also indicates that claims 23 and 24 contain patentable subject matter. Added claims 50, 51, 52, and 53, include the features of claims 23 and 24 (as well as features of claims 1 and 45). These claims are believed to be patentable.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 29, 32, 36-38 are allowed.

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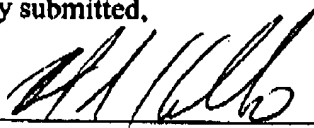
The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned, at the Examiner's convenience, should the Examiner have any questions regarding this communication or the present patent application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date

March 16, 2004

By:



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